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ABSTRACT

This booklet contains two papers on sex role identification and a description of a Big Brothers program to provide male models for boys whose fathers no longer live with them. The first paper explores the ways that children learn and confirm their sex roles. A rationale for the development of more androgynous sex roles is also presented. The second paper explores the potential effects of identifying with and therefore adopting mannerisms, attitudes, and emotional responses characteristic of a person of the other sex. The last paper provides some guidelines for counselors who wish to initiate a Big Brothers program. Sample letters are included for surveying elementary teachers for a list of boys whose fathers are not in the home; for sending information, application, and permission sheets to the elementary boys' mothers; for surveying the Big Brothers to determine their interests and hobbies; and for inviting the Little Brothers' Mothers to a get-together with the "Brothers." (Author/JEL)

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GUIDANCE FOR ANDROGYNY

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Sex Role Determinants

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this presentation is two-fold: to explore the ways that children learn and confirm their sex roles, and to present a rationale for the development of more androgynous sex roles.

The following points are discussed: 1) parents project their expectations of the child's appropriate sex role (consistent with his/her gender) within 24 hours of the child's birth: 2) the child's early home and school life socialization processes confirm his/her sex role to the point of stereotyping girls and boys into inflexible teenage and adult roles most often to the emotional detriment of the married woman: 3) in some sections of the American culture more flexible family styles and modern schools (fostering the individualized development of the child) are supporting the lessening of dichotomous sex-typed expectations concerning the interests, abilities and personality characteristics of boys and girls: and 4) counselors aware of the concept of androgyny (the appropriate development in boys and girls of valued characteristics from the masculinity-femininity contimuum) can help students grow toward more optimum personality functioning.

SEX ROLE DETERMINANTS

Bettie McComb, Counselor
NOVA Eisenhower Elementary School

About two years ago for early entry into first grade from Kindergarten, I tested an attractive dark-haired child with sparkling brown eyes. Nearly five years old, this child wore jeans and T-shirts as all the boys did and appeared not only intellectually competent but also physically capable and quite independent. The child's name was Amy.

Just two weeks ago a little first grade girl rushed out of the girls' bathroom and reported to the principal who happened to be nearby: "There's a boy in the girls' bathroom!" Mrs. Huff took the girl by the hand and went into the bathroom to investigate. "There he is - washing his hands! He's a boy and shouldn't be here!" the first grader said excitedly.

"I am a girl!" answered Amy positively. "I just like to wear boys' clothes!" And from that moment we knew Amy knew her sex-role identity, but that she also valued pants and shirts for whatever reasons, and had the courage and stability to make a public statement about it.

When one seeks to determine how children acquire their broad sexual identification, there is considerable body of research to review. However, one must use great caution in evaluating existing research because of the possibility that it may be based upon socially-acquired stereotypes which the researchers erroneously assume to be true.

Miriam Rosenberg (1973) at once supports and denounces sex role stereotypes when she says:

> "To the extent that role stereotypes provide security and stability, they can be useful: to the extent that they limit potentialities, they can be damaging".

If we survey TV programs, popular literature and comics we find the ideal American woman is seen as nurturant, passive, receptive, giving intuitive, emotional and weak. She is considered to be poor at mathematics, science and intellectual abstraction, takes great pains to be physically attractive, according to fleeting standards of feminine beauty, to the point of self-mutilation -- stiletto heels, bleached, lifeless hair and forever on a starvation diet. At the opposite end of the continuum our society sees the ideal male as strong, active, aggressive, competitive, unemotional and assuming leadership; he is good at science, math and intellectual abstraction, and is assumed to be the perfect match to take care of the dependent woman.

Is there a biological basis for these sex role stereotypes? Apparently not much. Apart from the constants that male participation in the reproductive act lasts a few minutes at most, while female participation lasts for months, and females nurse their off-spring for variable periods, the great body of research fails to prove the biological basis for our sex role stereotypes.

Rosenberg (1973) surveyed animal observation studies, scientific experiments, limited research with human pseudohermaphrodites, studies of the newborn and anthropological studies to reach the conclusion that a biological basis for our sex role stereotypes is most unlikely.

Margaret Mead (1935) studied three New Guinea tribes to determine the approved personalities for each sex. The Arapesh had both men and women in socially approved roles that correspond to the current ideal of the American woman: cooperative, responsive to needs and demands of others.

In sharp contrast, in the Mundugumor tribe both men and women developed as ruthless, aggressive, positively-sexed individuals with the nurturant aspects of personality at a minimum. Both males and females developed "normally" into what we would consider an undisciplined and very violent male. In a third tribe, the Tchambuli, Mead found the women dominant, impersonal and managing and the men less responsible and also emotionally dependent.

Apparently, then, there is little unbiased scientific evidence to support the biological basis for sex role stereotypes. Clearly, socialization plays a role so heavy that the biological component may be irrelevant (Rosenberg, 1973).

How then do children begin to identify themselves as male and female? The process begins long before the youngsters become aware of their own genitalia. Within the first 24 hours of a child's life a parent will have projected upon the baby the parents' social stereotype of the child's boy-ness or girl-ness. Rubin, Provenzano and Luria (1974) interviewed 30 pairs of first time parents, 15 with sons and 15 with daughters, within the first 24 hours after the child's birth. Although male and female infants did not differ in birth length, weight or Apgar scores, daughters were significantly more likely than sons to be described as "little", "beautiful","pretty" and "cute", and as resembling their mothers. Fathers made more extreme and stereotyped rating judgments of their newborn than did mothers. Findings suggest that sex-typing and sex-role socialization have already begun at birth.

Development of sex roles continues as babies grow into children and experience the socializing influences of families and school. Minuchin (1965) conducted a study that compared sex-role and sex-typed reactions of "traditional" schools and homes (which stress socialization toward general standards) with those of children from modern middle class schools and homes (which stress individual development). Subjects were 105 fourth grade nine-year-olds. Direct and projective techniques were used to test the hypothesis that conventional attitudes would be more characteristic of children from traditional backgrounds. Findings supported the hypothesis: unequivocal commitment to own sex role, sex-typed play, aggressive expression in boys and family orientation in girls were consistently characteristic of children from traditional backgrounds. Girls from modern backgrounds departed most from conventional expectations.

There were many significant conclusions to various aspects of Minuchin's study. In stressing the need for further careful research in the roles of home and school in the process of maturation toward a resolved sex identity Minuchin (1965) says:

> "It does not seem valid to assume, though psychological research has sometimes done so, that all departures from sex-typical behavior indicate faulty identification and poor prognosis for normal integrated development. Modern homes and schools have, in fact, followed different reasoning. They have assumed that the loosening of stereotypes in social roles and the provision of opportunity to develop in keeping with individual propensities would result in more integrated development and more resolved identity."

Research needs to follow the development of youngsters from modern and traditional backgrounds to assess their sex-role resolutions as these children move into adulthood.

In conclusion I would like to present for your consideration a new concept: the concept of psychological androgyny (Bem,1975). The entymological root of the Greek word is comprised of andro. referring to male, and gyn referring to female. The attractiveness of the concept of androgyny is that it suggests a model of well-being that draws from the valued characteristics on the masculine-feminine continuum.

Traditionally, men are perceived as independent and women are seen as dependent. But suppose women could freely develop as independant, capable individuals without society's impugning their sexual roles. Or, suppose men could freely develop their suppressed feeling of nurturance --- warm,compassionate caring behavior, for children, women and each other, without society's raised eyebrow or lifted pinky.

We are talking here, not about an either-or proposition,but a personality which can express valued characteristics from along the masculine-feminine continuity, as the situation requires. Such individuals are free to develop their own blends of temperament and behavior, above and beyond the narrow range of labels, which would ultimately enable them to have a richer sense of their maleness or femaleness.

As a final note let me add that I am indebted, for many of the ideas put forward in this presentation, to a fascinating volume, "Beyond Sex-Role Stereotypes: Readings Toward a Psychology of Androgyny", edited by Alexandra Kaplan and Joan Bean, Psychology Department of the University of Massachusetts, in Amherst.

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Diagnostic and Prognostic Implications of Other-Sex Identification

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the potential effects of identifying with and therefore adopting mannerisms, attitudes and emotional responses characteristic of a person of the other sex. Five points are discussed: 1) Sexual behavior and attitudes are primarily learned rather than genetic, hormonal or magical. 2) Some aspects of other-sex identification are of concern, chiefly because they may limit the child's interpersonal behavioral repertoire and lower self-esteem as a result of conflict with cultural or group norms. However, the same may be said of certain facets of same-sex identification. 3) Other-sex identification is not nearly as important as the specific characteristics of the individual(s) with whom one identifies in determining later behavior and adjustment. 4) Diagnosis and labeling of sexual "deviations" may pose more problems for the individual so labeled than do any of the specific behaviors on the basis of which the diagnosis was made. 5) Training in social skills and interpersonal relationships along with acceptance of a wide variety of behaviors as appropriate for both males and females are the most effective ways of preventing any sort of sexual "deviation". Satisfying adult sexual relationships depend upon development of social facility, respect for others, and self-confidence as a child and adolescent.

Diagnostic and Prognostic Implications of Other-Sex Identification

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> "...all human individuals, as a result of their bi-sexual disposition and of cross-inheritance, combine in themselves both masculine and feminine characteristics, so that pure masculinity and femininity remain theoretical constructions of uncertain content."
>
> (S. Freud, 1925, p.197)

Sexuality is, of course a volatile and sensitive issue in our culture, especially when the sex role orientation of an individual is concerned. Although we frequently think of ourselves as a liberal and progressive society, we generally draw the line when it comes to sexual "deviation". This is especially true in the realm of public education where both parents and educators are typically cautious about what aspects of sexuality may be discussed with school children and are apprehensive about the influence the sexual proclivities of a parent or teacher may have upon a youngster. In the recent gay rights referenda across the country, for example, one of the most frequently advanced arguments against equal protection for homosexuals under the law was that homosexual teachers might recruit or at least be a negative influence on their students. In addition there is a prevalent concern about the effect that a divorce, separation or death in the family and subsequently living with a single parent, may have on a child's development.

Underlying societal fears about sexual identification seem to be two deeply rooted assumptions. First it is assumed that, equal rights and women's liberation movements notwithstanding, there are fundamental

differences between the sexes which result in biologically "correct" behavior patterns for each. Most cultures therefore exert pressure toward the development of nurturance, obedience and responsibility in girls, and toward self-reliance, independence and achievement in boys (Barry, Bacon & Child, 1957). Substantial deviations from these patterns, especially on the part of developing males, are usually greeted with trepidation, censure, and accusations of abnormality.

The second assumption, grounded in orthodox psychoanalytic theory, is that unless a child successfully identified with the same-sex parent or parent-substitute, sexual difficulties such as fetishism, transvestism or homosexuality inevitably result. It is important to distinguish here between "sexual identification" and "gender identity". The latter refers to the conviction that one is either a male or a female. This awareness develops very early in a child's life, usually corresponds to morphological gender, and is quite resistant to change (Maccoby, 1966; Smart & Smart, 1977). Sexual identification, on the other hand, is the incorporation of a gender role model into the fabric of one's personality so that behaviors, attitudes, defenses and emotional responses characteristic of that individual are more or less permanently adopted. One may identify with a role model of the same or the other sex depending upon learning experiences and family dynamics. While proponents of different branches of psychoanalytic thought vary with regard to specification of the age at which this identification is normally completed, all hold that it does occur and that it accounts for the nature of adult sexual behavior.

Neither of these assumptions is, however, supported by current research results or by the weight of contemporary psychological theory. For example, after reviewing research relevant to genetic and hormonal

theories of homosexuality, Buss (1966), McMahon (1976), and Money (1970) conclude that most investigators have discarded assumptions of clearcut physiological differences between homosexuals and heterosexuals because none has received consistant support. Certainly genetics and biochemistry play a part in the types of behaviors in which one is capable of engaging, but as Ullman and Krasner (1975) so appropriately state, "perfect biological normality without accompanying social skill may lead to an unsatisfactory sexual adjustment." (p.424) Summarizing the results of cross-cultural studies of sexual behavior, Ullman and Krasner (1975) point out that "the range of behaviors considered appropriate cross-culturally is essentially the total range of observed sexual responses." (p.420) Moreover, they maintain that "nowhere is the role of social evaluation in the definition of abnormal behavior clearer than in the realm of sexual activity." (p.419) Further, Rosenberg and Sutton-Smith (1972), in discussing sex roles from anthropological and sociological perspectives, argue that behaviors characteristic of sex roles are quite mutable, and that the more complex the society, the smaller the relationship between role and morphological characteristics. It seems then that the very definition of sexual "deviation" and "inappropriate" sex role behavior is subject to cultural bias and the etiology is not demonstrably biochemical or genetic.

There is, in addition, a growing body of evidence which suggests that sexual identification is not an all-or-none process, especially <u>not</u> one which results in an individual's becoming homosexual, bisexual, heterosexual, perverted, or sexually deviant. Rather, as social learning proponents declare, in humans, sexual behaviors, as well as mannerisms and emotional responses which have sexual connotations, are predominantly

learned and are therefore subject to the cumulative effects of experience, feedback, and reinforcement from a variety of sources in the same fashion as any other complex set of learned responses (e.g., see Money and Alexander, 1969). There is also evidence that both sex role orientation and specific sexual practices can be unlearned and replaced by other modes of sexual adjustment, and that this transition may be in the direction of either increased or reduced social acceptability (see Ullman and Krasner, 1975 for examples). Thus the acquisition and display of any given mannerism does not necessarily imply that other behaviors in a sexual orientation syndrome will also be acquired or emitted as a matter of course. Nor is the behavior of a role model imitated in its entirety unless each aspect of it is reinforced by the individual's environment.

If, then,our assumptions concerning sexual identification are erroneous - if sex roles are not predominantly biologically determined, if sexual deviations are culturally-biased descriptions of behaviors and if identifying with a member of the opposite sex does not lead to perversion - why should we as educators be concerned about other-sex identifications and atypical sex role behavior at all? In my opinion we should not be concerned about those issues per se, but only as they influence an individual's ability to relate effectively to others and have a positive sense of self-worth. Unfortunately there are prejudices against assertive females and submissive males which are still profoundly ingrained in our social structure, prejudices which are perhaps as evident among psychologists, counselors, administrators and teachers as among parents and children. Most of us have, at one time or another, experienced the embarrassment of trying to explain away the effeminate behavior of a young boy to parents or guardians as "just a phase he's going through"

or as "a natural consequence of the absence of a father" which may be "cured" by securing an appropriate role model. Alternatively, we may have experienced the anguish, either as diagnosticians, counselors or referral sources, of relating to parents that their daughter seems to have developed an "inappropriate sexual identification" and suggesting that they seek psychotherapy of some sort. These difficult situations are, in most cases, brought about by a cultural, educational, and social environment which is still quite intolerant of disparities in sex role behavior. As a consequence of this prejudiced environment and not necessarily as a result of some inherent defect in the child, there are realistic potential damages to a youngster's self-image which can result from other-sex identification. However, these are far outweighed in my opinion, by the detrimental effects of labeling a child or adolescent sexually deviant.

One might demand to know at this point if we are not caught in a bind? Must we turn our backs on behavior which may reduce a child's self-esteem in a well-intended attempt to avoid attaching a label to the child? It seems to me that the appropriate tack is to respond to the needs of the child for developing sound, satisfying social skills rather than responding to the needs of the societal structure to squelch behavioral anomalies which are inconsistent with sex role expectations. The individual who feels secure about himself or herself, who repects others, and who feels comfortable relating to many types of people in a broad range of social situations is unlikely to be deviant in a harmful way but may indeed turn out to be different in a creative and and productive fashion. Achieving a positive self-concept and effective modes of relating to others may involve acquiring a Big Brother or Big Sister, entering therapy, participating in peer group discussions of how to stand up for one's rights and express

one's feelings, being taught specific social relationship skills, learning facts about sexuality, etc. It almost certainly must be accompanied by efforts to increase tolerance in the school and home environments for behaviors not usually thought to be characteristic of one's gender, i.e., to foster the concept of androgyny (see Spence and Helmreich, 1978). Satisfying adult sexual relationships depend upon the acquisition of accurate information and awareness of sex role biases as well as the development of social facility, respect for others, and self-confidence as a child and adolescent. These are the crucial characteristics to be instilled by a role model and do not depend upon that person's gender. On the contrary, regardless of the gender of the various role models in a child's life (and there are usually many rather than a single one), a positive, reinforcing, androgynous approach to dealing with the youngster's behavior will almost certainly pay off in terms of fostering psychological adjustment and adaptation.

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NOVA BROTHERS PROGRAM

Bettie McComb, Counselor
NOVA Eisenhower Elementary School

The mother of a fifth grade boy, whose father no longer lived with the family, (or had any intentions of so doing) called me in anguish one day, seeking some way to provide a masculine model for her son. He was the only male in the family having, in addition to his mother, two attractive sisters. When I recommended the Broward County Big Brothers program, she sighed and told me she had tried that. They had a waiting list 1500 lonely boys long.

"But you can solve the problem", she insisted. "Why not enlist the services of willing male students at NOVA High School? It's close by !". Why not indeed? - and thus was born - out of a mother's perception and creativity, the NOVA Brothers Program.

We contacted the Guidance Department at the NOVA High School, The counselor there liked the idea, and volunteered to present the concept to the boys' service clubs, who received it enthusiastically. The club members were encouraged to sign up for the program, but only if their commitment was to be for the entire year. It could not be a sometime thing. Eight seniors signed up, and the NOVA Brothers Program was operational. It has been a very rewarding program - for the Little Brothers, their appreciative mothers, and surprisingly, for the Big Brothers themselves.

For counselors who wish to initiate such a program the following guidelines will be helpful:

1. Secure principals' (elementary and high school) approval for program.

2. Contact high school guidance department for service club members' commitment.

3. Survey elementary teachers for a list of boys whose fathers are not in the home (death, divorce or stationed in the armed forces). (See attachment.)

4. Send information, application and permission sheets to elementary boys' mothers. (See attachment.)

5. Begin training sessions for Big Brothers. (Last year we used a modified version of Jim Gumaer's Peer Facilitator program. This year we will use the very similar Peer Facilitator Program by Dr. Robert Myrick, University of Florida. Three or four training sessions are sufficient at the outset - but "renewal" sessions may be necessary for later on.)

6. Survey Big Brothers to determine their interests and hobbies. (See attachment.)

7. Upon receipt of a mother's permission for her child to participate in the program, match a Little Brother to a Big Brother of similar interests.

8. Schedule with principal and classroom teachers a time block of 1½ hours per week for the Brothers to be together. (We used Wednesday, 1:30 until 3:00, at which time youngsters caught their buses to go home.)

9. Orient Big Brothers to location of sports equipment, games and other school materials which will be available to them during their 1½ hours with the Little Brothers.

10. "Get-Together" Day. Gather the Brothers together and introduce the Big Brothers to the Little Brothers. If possible, provide a small "picnic" (doughnuts and milk) so each set of Brothers can go out under a tree and get acquainted. Suggest that the younger brother take his Big Brother on a tour of the school.

11. Establish a permanent "greeting place" so each Big Brother will find his Little Brother at the same place when he arrives in the building. Also make clear where the Little Brother is to be when their time together is over.

12. Schedule, once a month, a Feedback Session for the Big Brothers. They sometimes have questions or observations they want to share with the counselor.

13. Avoid structuring the activities between the Big and Little Brothers. Their activities should grow and change as their relationship matures.

14. As the school year closes arrange a get-together so the boys can introduce their Big Brothers to their mothers. This may be a covered dish supper (with the mothers bringing their favorite casseroles) or a party with mothers sending in cookies and snacks. (See attachment.)

15. Explore separately with mothers and Big Brothers whether the relationship is to continue into the holidays, vacations, and other out-of-school times. Usually, this is best handled between mothers and Big Brothers since the counselor could not be accountable for such activities.

The NOVA Brothers Program has been such a warm rewarding program that there is some thought to expanding the program to include girls whose fathers are not readily available to them. We are currently exploring this possibility.

Date_____

Staff Members,

We have approached NOVA HIGH SCHOOL Guidance Department about asking their Service Clubs to provide "Big Brothers" for some of our boys whose fathers are not able to be with them on a regular basis. The response from the high school students was copious!----both enthusiasm-wise and quantity-wise!

We now need your help in compiling a list of boys in your classes who could use this kind of companionship.

Please list one or two youngsters in your class who would fit this category. We will then call the parent, secure written permission, and proceed with a matching-up process. The "Big Brothers", meanwhile will undergo some communication skill-building sessions, and hopefully we can actually begin the program right after the holidays.

Bettie McComb
Counselor

Teacher_____Grade Level_____

I think_____would fit into this program because --

I also think_____would be a good candidate because --

Date:_____

Dear Parent,

We are beginning a pilot "Big Brother" program with NOVA High School. A limited number of young men from NOVA High School have volunteered to come to Eisenhower School to spend two hours each week with elementary school boys.

We will try to place together big and little boys who have common interests so they may enjoy their activities together. Each Friday afternoon, from 1 to 3 o'clock, will be "Brother Time". The students will be free to use the buildings and playground and will be expected to behave in a manner appropriate to the area.

If you would like your child to participate in this program please return the permission form below.

Sincerely,

Bettie McComb
Counselor

Son's Name_____Birthday_____Age_____Grade_____

Mother's Name_____Telephone_____

Son's Interests or Hobbies_____

_____

I hereby give my son,_____, permission to participate in the NOVA BROTHERS PROGRAM.

_____
(Parent's Signature)

_____
(Date)

NOVA BROTHERS PROGRAM

NOVA High School
NOVA D. D. Eisenhower Elementary School

To the Big Brother: Please fill out the questionnaire below so we can match you with a Little Brother.

Name_____ Birth Date_____ Age_____ Grade_____

Address_____ Phone_____
(City)

Hobbies/Interests_____

Sports (If Any)_____

Favorite Subjects in School_____

Least-liked Subjects_____

What kind of books do you like to read?_____

What interests you about the NOVA BROTHERS Program?_____

If I am selected to be a Big Brother I promise to take good care of my Little Brother and to help him in any way I can.

_____

Dwight D. Eisenhower Elementary

March 18, 1977

Dear (Little Brother's Mother),

Because our Nova High School Big Brothers will be graduating the last week in March it will be necessary to bring to a close for this year our NOVA Brothers Program.

We had hoped to have a covered dish supper here at school and invite all the mothers to meet the Big Brothers. However, in talking with the older boys we found they were all working over the suppertime hours. To leave their jobs might be a risk to their keeping the job over the summertime.

We finally settled on a small "party", to be held Wednesday, March 23 at 1:30. If you are free at that time we'd love to have you come.

In any event, we thought you might want to send in a plate of your favorite "goodies" (cake, cookies, bars) to share with your son's Big Brother and the others.

The "Brothers" will spend an hour playing and come in for their 'goodies" at 2:15 just before school dismisses.

If you have questions, please call me at 587-4474.

Sincerely,

Bettie McComb

Bettie McComb,
Counselor